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The Providence and Purpose of God in our National
History.

A THANKSGIVING SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE

SAILORS' SNUG HARBOR,

STATEN ISLAND,

NOVEMBER 26TH, 1863,

BY

REV. CHARLES J. JONES,
CHAPLAIN,

(LATE PASTOR OF THE MARINERS' CHURCH, ON THE CORNER OF CATHARINE AND MADISON STREETS,
N. Y., UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE NEW-YORK PORT SOCIETY.)

New-York:

JOHN A. GRAY & GREEN, PRINTERS AND STEREOTYPER,
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DEUTERONOMY 8 : 2, 18-20.

2. AND thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, *and to prove thee*, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no.

18. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God : for *it is* he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as *it is* this day.

19. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

20. As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish ; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God.

OUR day of National Thanksgiving, this year, finds us—as it did last year—in the midst of calamity and civil war. And in some minds the inquiry may arise, Where is the propriety of offering thanksgiving in the midst of such scenes of suffering and distress ? Have we not more need of fasting and prayer and national humiliation ? These questions may appear pertinent and plausible, and to some extent correct. We have reason to mourn and weep over our sins, which are the sources of our sorrows. But it is far too narrow and contracted a view for us to take, that because we have *some* cause for weeping, we have, therefore, *no* grounds for thanksgiving. It has become a proverb among us that “there is a silver lining to every cloud.” There is no dispensation of the Divine Providence, however gloomy and painful, that has not some measure of mercy and goodness mingled with it, some sweet to neutralize its bitterness. “*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning;*” or as the proverb has it, “*The darkest hour is just before day.*”

It is not to be inferred from the use of these proverbs and Scripture sayings, that the darkness which we expect to be dissipated, is wholly unrelieved, even when it is most dense. When the providences of God are the darkest, they still are, like the sun, in what is called the annular eclipse, compassed about by a band of light, and the soul that has courage to look up through the darkness will find comfort derived from the relieving brightness. As in the natural eclipse the sun is still there, though the dark earth has thrust herself between us and its beauteous and life-cheering beams, so it is in the affairs of this life. The sun of the Divine favor is obscured or eclipsed to our eyes, because we suffer the world to occupy too prominent a place in our esteem ; to come between us and our God, and but for the promises of God's word that eclipse would be *total*. These promises, however, relieve the thick darkness, and while *they* remain, though all else were taken from us, there would still be grounds for thanksgiving, even in the midst of general gloom.

This is true, whether we take the wider range of thought and embrace the affairs of the nation, or whether we contract the circle of our vision and confine ourselves to what pertains to our own individual experience. The latter course would not now, however, comport with the duties of the hour, which are those of national thanksgiving.

Let us then take the wider range, and while we thank God, individually, for his manifold mercies and blessings to us and to ours, endeavor also to lift up our hearts in gratitude for the mercies bestowed upon our beloved land, and in this exercise, let us not confine ourselves simply to the present and existing state of affairs, but, in the spirit of the text I have chosen, recount the divine goodness to our nation from her very birth until now. "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. . . . Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God ; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God,

and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the Lord your God."

Thus did God command, and warn, and threaten the nation of his choice more than three thousand years ago, and such counsel no nation can reject, in this day, without bringing down on themselves the judgments written in his Book.

That we may suitably express our thanksgiving to God for national blessings this day, let us endeavor to

I. Call to mind some of the peculiar manifestations of the Divine goodness toward this nation from its inception to the present hour.

Let us remember, too, in the second place, that

II. In return for all these Divine favors it is God's purpose that we, as a people, should walk before him in humble obedience all the days of our national life.

But,

III. If we fail to fulfill the Divine purpose, voluntarily, by our obedience, He will secure it in our destruction, and against our will.

Let us then endeavor to

I. Call to mind some of the peculiar manifestations of the Divine goodness toward the nation, from its inception to the present hour. "Thou shalt remember," or call to mind, "all the way, etc." By this it is meant that we should often recount the mercies and blessings of which our nation has been the recipient. It is not thoughtlessly, therefore, or without reason, that these words have been selected as the basis of an appeal to you, my beloved hearers, to-day. There are analogies in the history of nations, and general principles of the Divine government are involved in them all. And there are not wanting in the history of Israel many things which have their parallels in the Divine dealings with our own land. The Hebrew people were the recipients of the Divine favor in a peculiar manner, and on that account were under peculiar responsibility to give the glory of all these blessings to God, from whom they came.

Responsibility is the correlate of privilege. To whom much is given, from them much is required. This is a law of the Divine procedure, and is as applicable to America, as a nation, as it was to Israel. The same arguments to obedience, to humility, to gratitude, to holy zeal, lie against us as against them.

(1.) In recounting the blessings of Providence to our nation to-day, we may remember that, like Israel of old, we were privileged to spring from a pious ancestry. The germ of godliness was planted at our nation's birth, and has since borne much precious fruit among our hills and vales, and on the borders of our mighty streams. We cherish, with grateful homage, the memory of our Puritan and Huguenot ancestors, as the people of God of old preserved in their memories the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs, their descendants. A virtuous parentage is the noblest inheritance of individuals and nations.

"Our origin as a people has been noble. Our ancestry were self-denying, heroic, energetic, pious. The older the world grows, the more will it honor the name of Puritan. That title will be a synonym for all that is illustrious in patriotism, fearless in liberty, devoted in piety. Our Puritan fathers were the best spirits of England. Born in agitated times, nursed in the iron cradle of persecution, freemen of the freest country on earth, and freemen by a yet nobler title," with the liberty with which Christ makes his people free.

(2.) The dearth of corn drove the progenitors of Israel into Egypt, the dearth of liberty, the freeman's birthright, drove our ancestors across the stormy sea.

Israel was nourished in her infancy, and afterward oppressed and enslaved by Egypt, in that day the most powerful and mighty among the nations, as our ancestors grew up and flourished, and afterwards were oppressed and burdened by the Government of Great Britain, then the most potent and influential among the nations of the earth.

A third analogy may be pointed out, namely :

(3.) After remaining in Egypt two hundred and fifteen years, oppressed and enslaved and brutalized by the Egyptians, God raised up a Moses to bring his people out from under the iron hand of their task-masters, so after our fathers had re-

mained, first under the fostering care and then under the despotism of Great Britain one hundred and fifty years, God sent to the Americans a George Washington to lead them forth to liberty and peace. For his leadership, his statesmanship, his wisdom and prudence, and for his paternal counsels, we can never be sufficiently thankful. And again, as at the end of the forty years referred to in the text, God brought his people into the possession of "*a good land, and a large,*" "*a land of springs of water, whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills they might dig brass.*" So did He, after the depressing influences of our Colonial oppression and of our revolutionary struggle had terminated, give to us "*a land wherein we have eaten bread without scarceness,*" (Deut. 8 : 9,) and bids us, as he bade them, "*Remember the Lord our God, who gives us power to get wealth,*" (8 : 18.) He gave us too, a government, which, in the simplicity of its Republican Institutions, contrasts favorably with the despotsisms of the old world ; a government which is a part of ourselves ; a government of the people and not of a privileged class against the people ; a government better fitted than any other form to promote the happiness of the people, and to accomplish God's purpose of mercy to a fallen world.

(4.) Again, as in the after years of the history of his people, *Jehovah* watched over their growth and gave them rulers, and enlarged their domain "*from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth,*" and increased their influence, and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies ; and still later, for the punishment of their sins, gave them over to domestic strife and division, or national disruption ; so has he enlarged the area of our inheritance, increased our influence among the nations, multiplied for us the material resources of our land, revealed to us stores of the precious metals, gold and silver, and permitted us to extend our area from sea to sea—from the Atlantic to the Pacific—and to carry our white-winged commerce to the ends of the earth.

"Our Country ! 'tis a glorious land !
With broad arms stretched from shore to shore.
The proud Pacific chafes her strand,
She hears the dark Atlantic roar ;

And nurtured on her ample breast,
 How many a goodly prospect lies
 In nature's wildest grandeur dressed,
 Enameled with the loveliest dyes."

" Land of the West! beneath the heaven,
 There's not a fairer, lovelier clime ;
 Nor one to which was ever given
 A destiny more high, sublime!"

Yet in this so long well-favored land God has at last completed the analogy, and for the punishment of our sins has given us up to the horrors of a civil war.

I said completed the analogy; but I mean completed only so far as the history has, in the foregoing, been traced.

God's subsequent dealings with the people of his choice has also its lessons for us, which God grant we may never be called practically to learn ! for if the analogy has been carried out with such fearful exactness, even to the disruption of the commonwealth, may not God, for our sins, if not repented of, pursue the analogy still further and take away from us both our name and our nation, as he took away theirs ? The very question itself is fraught with terrible associations. What then shall the reality be ? Shall we not on this day of national convocation resolve in the gratitude of our hearts that whatever others may do we will henceforth, as a people, live to the glory of God ?

But we are now in the very midst of war, and this war is doubtless a part of the Divine plan, a part of his purpose "*to humble us, and to prove us, and to know what is in our hearts, whether we will keep his commandments or no.*" It is a terrible spectacle, this civil war. Any war is terrible, but how much more such a war as this, the most desolating, the most relentless and cruel of all wars ; a war of sections, in which those who once stood side by side in the defense of the liberties of our land, bound up in the same holy ties of a fraternal patriotism, are now arrayed against each other in deadly strife, each seeking to secure his purpose in the death or entire subjugation of the other. The mighty prowess which once carried dismay into the ranks of the common enemy, when North and South, united, went shoulder to shoulder into the bloody

conflict, and hurled back the serried hosts of British veterans, is now divided against itself, and if the strife continue the nation must of necessity fall.

But it will not continue ; God will not give us up. If the Church be true to herself, the Church of Jesus Christ in this land, with its thirty thousand pastors and its four million of members, if, I say, she is true to herself, and pleads for pardon and peace as Abraham once plead for the cities of the plain, God will certainly hear and answer and save. "*He will hear, he will save,*" "*He is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us.*" And if he is on our side we can not fail, though we die in the struggle, for

"They never fail who die
In a great cause : the block may soak their gore ;
Their heads may sodden in the sun : their limbs
Be strung to city gates and castle walls—
But still their spirit walks abroad. Though years
Eclipse, and others share as dark a doom,
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which overpower all others, and conduct
The world at last to freedom."

Let us then look up, thank God, and take courage. Among the many reasons for thanksgiving that present themselves at this time, no one blessing is more calculated to excite our gratitude than the great and incontestable fact that

(1.) *God reigns*—above the strife of factions, above the tricks of soulless politicians, above the petty cabals of those who fight for place and power, above the mistakes of friends and the malice of enemies, above the lawless instigators of riot and disorder, *Jehovah reigns, and reigns supreme*. Our armies, our navy, our sons and brothers, our husbands and fathers, are all in his hands. Our cause is his. Our interests are his. Ours is the cause of oppressed humanity, the cause of labor, the cause of liberty in its widest sense, the cause of justice, of truth, of God. Against us are armed hosts, counted by the hundreds of thousands ; a rebellion so gigantic that the world has never seen its equal. No nation has ever been so assailed as we are now, and triumphed.

Our enemies are laboring to pull down and destroy our national edifice ; we labor to sustain it. Their motto is destruction—"Rule or Ruin." Ours is preservation, consolidation, unity, and subjection to constituted authority. We may, therefore, encourage one another, and speak comfortably to each other, as Hezekiah to his people, saying :

"Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him, for there be more with us than with him.

"With him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles." (2 Chron. 32 : 7, 8.)

Our success, then, let it be understood, depends not alone on any ability of our own, any peculiar skill or strategy of generals, nor upon our agencies or instrumentalities. Let our meddling politicians remove general after general for their own selfish purposes, God still reigns, Jesus Christ is still the King of Providence, doing his will in the armies of heaven and of earth. He can not be removed, and he will do all his pleasure. Jehovah is a man of war ; he fights on the side of truth, of justice, of right ; He will give us the victory, and when gained we may sing as Moses and Miriam :

"The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation ; he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation ; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

"The Lord is a man of war : the Lord is his name.

"Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea : his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

"The depths have covered them : they sank in the bottom as a stone.

"Thy right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power : thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

"And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee : thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble." (Ex. 15 : 2-7.)

Let us then give thanks that he still reigns and holds the sceptre of power in his own hands.

"*Jehovah reigneth*, let the earth rejoice, and let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof."

This thought has been beautifully referred to in the President's proclamation, in which he says :

"The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they can not fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God.

"In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to invite and provoke the aggressions of foreign States, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

"The needful diversions of wealth and strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense, have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship. The axe has enlarged the borders of our settlements; and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

"No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

"It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people; I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and all those who are at sea, and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday in November next as a day of thanksgiving and prayer to our beneficent Father, who dwelleth in the heavens."

Again it is a ground for thanksgiving—

(2.) That he has not given us over into the hands of our enemies. This was a source of gratitude to Israel of old.

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say;

"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us:

“ Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us :

“ Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul :

“ Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

“ Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.

“ Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers : the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

“ Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” (Psalm 124 : 1-8.)

Is it not meet then that we should also give thanks that Jehovah has not given us up as a prey to their teeth ? And why not ? Why were they not successful in their inroads on the Border States ? Why have they not overrun the North ? Why have we not been more effectually divided here ? Why have not our streets run blood, and our hearthstones been polluted ? Why has the area of riot, as well as its duration, been so limited ? Simply because God has not permitted it to extend ! Why has not the reign of terror that accompanied or that characterized the French Revolution of 1793 been reënacted here ? It surely is not because we have not disaffected spirits enough, and ripe enough, to produce such a reign of anarchy. Our recent riots in New York contradict such an assumption.

It is because of God’s restraining hand, for

“ Treason and murder ever kept together,
As two yoke devils, sworn to either’s purpose,
Working so grossly in a natural cause
That admiration did not whoop at them.”

God has punished us much less than we deserved. Shall we not thank him for this also, and sing with the psalmist :

“ The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and of great mercy. He will not always chide ; neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins ; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities ; for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath

he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitith his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear him ; for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." (Psalm 103 : 8-14.)

(4.) The prospective death of human slavery on this continent is another cause for thanksgiving. However indifferently we may think of the morality of that institution, we must admit that it has always been a bone of contention, and hence, if it can be removed out of the way, as a cause of strife, it will be a great blessing and a cause for devout thanksgiving. Whatever our political opinions may be, the result is, must be, patent to all. Slavery, as an institution, has received its mortal wound ; it must die, or become universal on this continent if the defenders of the Union fail.

Let us give thanks too that our harvests have been so abundant, that our garners and store-houses are filled with the finest of the wheat ; that the scourge of the Southern climate has not decimated our armies, and that our victories, many of them, have been so cheaply secured, as it regards the loss of human life. Let us glance at our situation as compared with the state of affairs at the opening of the year :

"Then," in the words of another, "there was little in our position that was hopeful. Central Tennessee was not rescued from rebellion ; for East-Tennessee and its heroic Unionists there had been not even an effort. Kentucky was still overrun at will by rebel marauders. Missouri was a prey to guerrillas, to malice domestic and foreign levy. In Arkansas we had no secure foothold. Most of Louisiana was hostile. Texas was abandoned to the rebels; her resources were the support of the Confederacy, and her frontiers the open gates of an immense illicit commerce. The Mississippi was still fast locked—the iron grip of the rebellion on Vicksburgh and Port Hudson not in the least loosened. The East had witnessed no great victory, no advance toward Richmond ; was only half cheered in the Fall of 1862 by an indecisive success at Antietam, and was painfully disheartened by the defeat of Fredericksburgh. The blockade of the Atlantic ports was scandalously imperfect ; the trade of Charleston and Wilmington never so prosperous.

"More than all, the people were discouraged, disaffected to the Government, seemingly half inclined to abandon the contest. They had impatiently signified in recent elections that they were dissatisfied with the conduct of the war. It seemed to be doubtful whether they would continue

to furnish the supplies necessary to pursue it. The finances were disordered, gold at an enormous premium, confidence in the solvency of the Government seriously shaken. In finance as in politics the efforts of the Peace factions were steadily directed to weaken the Government, and compel it to abandon either the war, or the policy by which alone the war could be successful. Look where you might the horizon was in gloom.

"What a contrast to-day! The Government is once more supported by the confidence of the people. The success of its financial measures is put beyond question by their generosity and patriotism. The loyal States have declared by unequaled majorities that they are unalterably for the war; that they mean to put this rebellion utterly down; the rebellion, its cause, supporters, sympathizers, and allies. The North has met and defeated the most desperate effort of the rebellion, and the victory of Gettysburgh has settled that henceforth invasion is impossible. A National army, overwhelming in force, hovers on the bank of the Rapidan, just ready to cross. Charleston, pestilent birth-place of rebellion, sees its strongest defenses shattered, its trade annihilated, its streets swept by hostile cannon, and its fall already impending. We hold Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri, much of Arkansas and Louisiana, and have just closed the western outlet of Texas. The Mississippi flows unfettered to the sea. Vicksburgh fell, the fruit of a campaign unequaled in brilliancy and in material results by any movements of the war. Port Hudson followed as of course, and the territory of the Confederacy was riven in twain. Mississippi is practically abandoned by the rebels; no force of consequence there on foot. East-Tennessee, just rescued from rebel persecution, is held inflexibly at Knoxville, and the key of its possession—Cumberland Gap—not even threatened. The West, Southwest and North-west, are indissolubly assured to the Union.

"More than all, on the eve of our Thanksgiving, come the tidings of battles and prospect of a great victory at Chattanooga; General Grant victorious, General Burnside safe, and the rebel hope of regaining Tennessee extinguished. Forget the preceding history of the year if you will; for this triumph you can not withhold your thanks."

(5.) Another cause that I may mention as suggesting itself is the gift of an honest-hearted, clear-headed, strong-minded man at the head of our affairs; the right man in the right place; a man so universally respected that even his political opponents do not fear to ascribe to him the appellation of "Honest Abe Lincoln." He has made some mistakes, doubtless; he is not perfect, and where could we find a perfect man, but he is given of God to occupy the chair of state. He has evidently "*come to the kingdom for such a time as this.*" His integrity, his simplicity, his cheerfulness, his unalloyed patriotism, his expressed confidence in the great Ruler of nations,

and his hopefulness of the future, have won for him a shrine in the heart of the nation.

What is true of President Lincoln may also be predicated of many other men, who, during this storm of Rebellion, have been called to the helm of Government, and to the conduct of our affairs; men who with all their failures and shortcomings, seem to unite in the *one* great, glorious, and prevailing sentiment of trust—confiding trust—in God, as the Great Disposer of events, and as the controlling mind in the direction of our affairs.

No better evidence of this can be desired than is afforded in the proclamations which have been issued by our Mayors and Governors, in response to that of the Chief Magistrate of the Nation, and in the orders issued by many of our commanding officers in the army and in the navy. Surely we can not be thankful enough that God has brought such men into prominence at such a time as this—men who are not ashamed to acknowledge the hand of God in our affairs, or to counsel submission to his holy will. See the proclamation of Mayor Opdyke, of New-York, in which he says:

“Perhaps, never before since we became a nation have we had more reason for heartfelt gratitude to God for the greatness of his mercies. He has spared us from pestilence, and, through abundant harvests and remunerative industry, blessed us with unusual prosperity. By his aid and guidance we have been enabled to repel the assaults of treason and lawlessness which threatened to convert our land of Constitutional Liberty into the abode of Anarchy, and to make our name a by-word and reproach among the nations. In the midst of the calamities of war a brighter future dawns upon us. Our forces are victorious on sea and land; the area of the rebellion has been circumscribed; treason has been rebuked; the spirit of anarchy subdued; the sentiment of loyalty strengthened; foreign enmity abated. Let us pray that these auspicious results may be speedily followed by the restoration of peace and fraternal feelings throughout the land; that as a warning to posterity the instigators of the rebellion, who have so wantonly and wickedly attempted to destroy our priceless Union, may be subjected to just punishment for their crime, and that their misguided followers may be brought back to their allegiance and duty; that all who have sinned against the majesty of law, in madly striving to subvert the mild and beneficent Government under which we live, may repent of their treason, and have the sentiment of patriotism rekindled in their hearts.”

Similar expressions of dependence on the Divine hand have been uttered by the Governors of Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New-Jersey, New-York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, (West,) Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota.

(6.) Another source of gratitude is presented to us in the fact that amid all the upheaving of the masses of society, these changes in men's political ideas—amid all these conflicting interests of men—amid this chaos of old institutions, this array of opposing elements, these murderous assaults of open and armed enemies and the illogical fallacies and absurd deductions of pretended friends, who are only so many malicious enemies in disguise, wolves in sheep's clothing—amid all this confusion and turmoil, and all these revolving ideas, the people, as a body, are true—true to the heart's core; have what we call "backbone;" in other words, have confidence in God, confidence in themselves, confidence in the great principles of self-government, confidence in law, in Gospel, in right, in the eternal principles of justice, and last, though not least, confidence in one another.

Blessed be God, then, for public confidence. For, as Luther has truly said: "Where this virtue is lacking, there men are suspicious, froward, wayward, dogged, and so neither will believe any thing, nor give place to any body. They can suffer nothing; whatsoever a man saith or doeth never so well, they cavil and slander it, so that whosoever serveth not their humor can never please them. Therefore it is impossible for them to keep charity, friendship, concord and peace with men."

"The history of mankind has demonstrated the great truth that without this faith (or confidence in one another) liberty can not exist, and when rooted from the public mind and extirpated by violence, as has been so fearfully accomplished by some of the persecuting nations of Europe, the mutual ties of society become but a rope of sand. The true statesman is he who is most truly possessed by this lesson."

For a marked contrast to the state of things among us, turn to France in 1793, where the want of confidence filled all with heart-burnings and jealousies. Each was suspicious of

his neighbor. Mutual distrust brought forth mutual recriminations; each charged the other with treason to the state, and the result was, blood deluged the land.

“Through the streaming streets
Of Paris, red-eyed massacre, o'er-wearied,
Reeled heavily, intoxicate with blood.”

The landmarks of justice and security were swept away as by an overwhelming tide of corruption. The land was left bare of moral principle and religious truth, and everywhere was visible the want of a common faith.

(7.) *Yet once more!* Let us give thanks to God for a *healthy patriotism*; for the spontaneity with which our people, of every class, sprang to arms at the call of the Executive to protect our starry banner and restore the dominion of the General Government. The first shot fired on Sumter fired the national heart. The insult to our flag thrilled the nation, and as the tidings flew on the lightning's wing to every city and town and village and hamlet and roadside dwelling, a half a million of men sprung to the rescue. The earth shook to their tread. The air was vocal with their songs. With bounding step and buoyant hearts they sought the centres of population, enrolled their names as defenders of their country, fell into the ranks and took up their line of march for the field of fight, their pulses throbbing and their feet beating time to the music of the Union.

Since then, hundreds of thousands more have gone forth from the home and fireside to share the perils of field and flood, to endure the dangers and privations of the march and the bivouac, laying their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honors, as the patriots of old, on the altar of their bleeding country; leaving their loved ones behind, as a sacred charge to those of us who remain at home. Let us, then, I say, thank God for the zeal and courage that animated them, for their unselfish devotion, for their heartfelt patriotism, all of which combine in declaring them to be worthy of the sires from whom they sprung, and fitting representatives of the land of their birth and their adoption. Thus may it ever be in this good land! And let us, while we give thanks, resolve also that

Firm, firm as the rock our Fathers trod,
 Each patriot heart shall be ;
 Each arm shall be nerved when our country calls :
 Her sons are brave and free,
 Her daughters are cast in Virtue's mould,
 Their hearts are freedom's shield,
 And the rising race, by their precepts taught,
 Shall be meet for the battle-field.

(8.) The only other cause for thanksgiving and gratitude that I can now mention—and I mention it last because the best—is God's spiritual presence, the gift of the Holy Ghost, the conversion of souls in the army and in the navy. Not in the Federal army alone, but in the ranks of our enemies also, God is bringing men to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Another result of the visitation of the Spirit is the unity and activity of Christians in the several departments of Christian effort—Christian Commissions, Sanitary Commissions, Army Committees, camp prayer-meetings ; prayer-meetings on the berth-deck of our men-of-war ; prayer-meetings in the chains, in the tops, in the fore-passage ; prayer-meetings in the cabin and forecastles of our merchant vessels. Our Union prayer-meetings at home, morning and noon and afternoon and night, and the fervent appeals to the throne of grace from thousands of family altars, for the loved ones who have gone forth to the field of strife and to the perils of the blockade on a stormy coast—all, all are so many indications of the Divine favor to our land ; for when God designs to give, he always stirs up his people to ask.

Again, we should bear in mind that all these providences of God, whether pleasing or painful, are so many evidences of the presence of Jehovah, and of his long-suffering and forbearance, of his compassionate love, and his tender mercy.

“That things to mortals are mysterious is not because the things themselves are dark, but the perceptions through which they are viewed.” We are short-sighted mortals, and can not see always what is for our good. We can claim nothing for ourselves, or for our wisdom, either in keeping ourselves from falling into evil, or in extricating ourselves when overtaken. It is Jehovah who putteth down one and raiseth up another.

He is equally in the pillar of cloud, and in the pillar of fire, in the destroying scourge, and in the abundant harvest, in the devastations of war, and in the immunities and privileges of peace.

“ O'er all confusions marring earth and air,
 O'er all the shuddering hours of man's despair,
 Still reigns one fixed decree of peace and love,
 And still, though dim below, 'tis bright above.”

“ Deep in unfathomable mines
 Of never-failing skill,
 He treasures up his bright designs,
 And works his sovereign will.

“ Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take ;
 The clouds ye so much dread
 Are big with mercy, and shall break
 In blessings on your head.”

Consider, again, as a means of exciting your gratitude, the variety of these Providential interpositions. “ Thou shalt remember *all the way*,” etc.

During all the error in the wilderness, God's watchful eye was over his people, preserving, controlling, directing and teaching them, delivering them from their enemies, from hunger and thirst and fatigue, from fiery flying serpents, from the pestilence and from the earthquake, and from the fearful result of their own sins. All these things they were required to call to mind when offering their thanksgivings unto God.

The bitterness of their enemies and the barrenness of the wilderness was alike overcome by the presence of Jehovah in the midst of them ; so that he who was employed to *curse* them gave as a reason for blessing them : “ God is not a man, that he should lie ; neither the son of man, that he should repent : hath he said, and shall he not do it ? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ? Behold, I have received commandment to bless : and he hath blessed, and I can not reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel : the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. God brought them out of Egypt ; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. Surely there is no enchantment against

Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel ; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, What hath God wrought ? Behold the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion : he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain." (Numbers 23 : 19-24.)

Has not the same loving-kindness been evinced in God's dealings with us ? Have we not been delivered in two wars with the mightiest power among the nations of the earth ? In the Mexican war, too, resulting from the slaveholders' demand for Texas—which was required to make more slave territory—even there he came to the aid of the nation, and delivered us from the punishment our sins deserved ; and again in the Trent affair, when that magnanimous nation ! Great Britain, took advantage of our weakness, he was pleased again to interpose and deliver us from the perils of a foreign war, superadded to a domestic one. He has kept us free from the desolating scourge, from famine, from thirst, from commercial disaster. He has enlarged the area of our commerce, and has secured for us the respect of all the world ; so that the American flag is everywhere hailed as the symbol of liberty and the rights of man all over the world. Notwithstanding the huge blot of slavery, which, while we held four millions of souls for whom Christ died in hopeless bondage, gave the lie to all our pretensions, God did not forsake us. He is now evidently about to purge out that spot from our escutcheon. His providential dealings with us are meant to humble us, and to prove us, and to know what is in our hearts, and to see whether we will keep his commandments or no.

This has doubtless been his purpose all along. The Hebrews were required to look back over a period of forty years of providential favor. They were called upon to admire the *continuance* of God's loving-kindness. They had in that time often provoked him to anger by their sins. Yet he had not given them up.

O my dear friends ! look back over our history from the beginning. What amazing long-suffering has God manifested toward us ! Bearing with all our presumptuous boasting,

with our money-loving, mammon-worshipping propensities, with our slavery to fashion, with our pride, our self-conceit, our contempt in many instances for law and for constituted authority, with the disposition we have manifested to despise our rulers, to speak evil of dignities, to arrogate to ourselves peculiar virtues, while we have ruthlessly endeavored to overthrow long-established statutes, pitting money against justice, until even the ermine of our judges has become polluted with bribery and their hands stained with blood. Immense profits are considered a sufficient argument against all law, common or statute, human or divine. The Sabbath has been desecrated, is now desecrated all over the land. And it is considered by some, ay, by hundreds of thousands of our citizens, a sufficient excuse for its violation that the customs of our Puritan ancestors are obsolete, and of necessity ought to be overthrown, and that the necessity of pleasure is enough to offset all demands made for the consecration of its hours to holy rest. Yet with all this, God has not forsaken us utterly. He has yet a seed to serve him in this land. He has chastened us sore, but has not given us over unto death.

II. The Divine purpose in all this is to humble and prove the nation, and know what is in our heart, and see whether we will keep his commandments or no. Privileges such as we have received involve immense responsibilities, and God himself declares to us as emphatically as to Israel of old, that,

III. If we fail to fulfill the Divine purpose voluntarily by our obedience, he will secure it in our destruction. As we look for rewards in the way of obedience, so may we expect the penalties when in the way of disobedience. It was thus that God taught the Jewish nation, and he would have the lesson learned by all nations, and consequently by ours. What he has said in the close of this chapter, to the people of Israel, he has said to all nations by the prophet Jeremiah : "And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it ; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them." (Jeremiah 18 : 9-10.)

And again by Isaiah, (60 : 12,) "*The nation and kingdom*

that will not serve thee shall perish, yea those nations shall be utterly wasted."

Now in conclusion, my dear people, I have endeavored to set before you as a ground of thanksgiving, the providence and purpose of God in our national affairs, and I trust that you have been stirred to gratitude by the recital of his blessings, and resolve in view of them, that whatever others may elect to do, you will walk before him in the future in holy obedience, and, by your salutary example, add to the stock of public virtue, and to the preciousness of the offering of thanksgiving which our nation will present to-day and hereafter before the Lord. And I close with the words of Jehovah himself, to his own people, by the pen of the inspired prophet:

"Wash ye, make you clean: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." (Isaiah 1 : 16-20.)

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